



IOWA GROWERS' NEWS

July 17, 2008

Issue 3

THE IMPACT OF FLOODS ON YOUR PRODUCE

The floods of 2008 have had a devastating impact on many Iowans. The Governor's disaster proclamation includes eighty-six counties. With all that Iowans are forced to deal with, we cannot let food safety be an added burden.

Iowa State University Extension has a publication (SP 328) entitled "Garden Produce in Floods" that has excellent information regarding the safety of unharvested fruits and vegetables.

Maturity of produce at the time of flooding is a key element in the food's

safety. If fruits and vegetables were ready for harvest and came in contact with floodwater, they should not be used.

Certain fruits and vegetables are more susceptible to bacterial contamination than others. Produce with a protected outer skin may be able to be used if properly washed and/or peeled prior to use. According to the ISU Publication, some foods such as strawberries are deemed unsafe regardless of maturity.

This publication can be viewed on our website under "Hot Topics."

Look Inside:

- Farm Bill updates
- Iowa Farm to School Program
- Specialty crop brochures available

USDA regulations on food and flooding can be found at www.fda.gov

HELP MINIMIZE YOUR RISKS—ADD YOUR ORCHARD, ACREAGE OR VINEYARD TO THE SENSITIVE CROPS REGISTRY

Great news for commercial fruit and vegetable growers! The registry that was developed to protect beehives from harmful pesticides has been expanded to include pesticide-sensitive crops. The "Sensitive Crops Directory" will provide pesticide applicators with the locations of those crops that are most susceptible to pesticide drift damage. The intended crops for inclusion in the registry are vineyards (minimum one acre), orchards (minimum one acre), certified organic crops (minimum one acre), and fruit and vegetable crops (minimum 1/2 acre). The crops at each registered location must be intended for commercial use, be susceptible to pesticide drift damage and must meet the minimum acreage requirements.

In addition to the registry, "No Spray" signs are available at a cost of only \$5 each with no fee for shipping. The aluminum signs are 12" X 18" and are to be posted at the physical location of the pesticide sensitive crop at a height above the crop canopy that will make the field marker visible to both ground and aerial applicators.

To obtain a sign, you must be registered in the directory. To become part of the Sensitive Crops Directory, you can now register online at www.iowaagriculture.gov. To register, click on the "Find Iowa Products" tab at the top of the page and select the "Sensitive Crop Directory Link."



FEATURE CROP

Looking for an easy to grow, fruitful crop that can withstand adverse temperatures and poor soil conditions? Labeled as “the new celery,” Swiss Chard is a crop to consider. It’s a colorful addition to your garden with nearly no waste as both the stalk and leaves can be eaten. Swiss Chard is part of the beet family and there are several varieties to choose from. Swiss Chard has oval-shaped, glossy, crisp, dark green leaves with white center ribs, on fleshy green or red stalks (for red chard); mild taste similar to beets; leaves can be used in salads; and both leaves and stalks can be steamed or sautéed. Swiss Chard can be planted in the shady part of your garden and can even survive if planted in some of your poorest soil. To lessen the bitter taste, make sure the plant gets watered while you are watering the rest of the garden. It can be planted in the spring as soon as the soil can be worked and can generally be harvested within four to six weeks. Mix it with your salad greens or substitute it for your celery, Swiss Chard can serve many uses. Rich in vitamins and nutrients, Swiss Chard is full of vitamins K, A, C and E



Swiss Chard

and should be an easy sell as a leafy green mix at your local Farmers Market.

WHAT’S HAPPENING?

Farm Bill

The 2008 Farm Bill was passed! Highlights of the bill include significant gains for sustainable agriculture. Some of the highlights of this bill include:

- Cost share assistance for organic certification;
- Increased funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) with a lower payment limitation;
- Continuous sign up for the Conservation Stewardship Program (previously entitled The Conservation Security Program);
- Establishment of a purchasing preference for locally produced fruits, vegetables, dairy and meats for the Farm to School Program;
- Creates a competitive grant program to support distribution and marketing of healthy and locally produced food.



Iowa Farm to School Program

Progress is being made in the Iowa Farm to School Program. We believe that the success of this program depends on strong local networks of individuals and organizations familiar with their community’s resources and needs. To do this, we have developed “Farm to School Chapter Packets.” These packets are now available for individuals or groups interested in starting a local Farm to School chapter. The packets help inventory local resources and provide guidance and support in starting local groups. By being a vested group, you greatly enhance the chance of long-term success. Contact our office to obtain your Farm to School Chapter Packet today!

View more about the Farm to School Program on our website at www.iowaagriculture.gov.

A NEW LOOK, CHECK IT OUT

There is a new face and a new look to the Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. Dorothy Lewis has been hired as the new Executive Secretary. If

you haven’t joined the IFVGA, you may want to give them a second look. View their website at www.iafruitandvegetablegrowers.org.

FREE ADVERTISEMENT!

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship is updating its directories of Iowa Producers of Fruit and Vegetables on the department website (www.iowaAgriculture.gov).

The purpose of this directory is to provide a link between producers and potential consumers. The department reserves the right to determine eligibility for inclusion in these directories.

Only businesses that complete the new survey will be listed. The look of the directories will change somewhat and different information will be offered so do not delay in providing us with this information.

Contact Emily Wadle at 515-725-2078 or by e-mail at Emily.wadle@iowaagriculture.gov for more information.



Iowa Growers' View

Comments from Growers

The weather data in this table was obtained from the State Climatologist Harry Hillaker. The totals used were derived from data taken from January through June, 2008. The numbers do not show an accurate reflection of the variation in weather from month to month, just an average.

North West	Temp	-2.8	
	Precipitation	- .3	
North Central	Temp	-2.9	
	Precipitation	+4.3	
North East	Temp	-2.6	
	Precipitation	+7.3	
West Central	Temp	-3.2	
	Precipitation	+2.0	
Central	Temp	-2.4	Great apple crop . Behind on thinning. Pumpkins look good only problem may be weed control due to frequent rains. Timely rains in fall should produce a better than average crop.
	Precipitation	+2.6	
East Central	Temp	-3.3	
	Precipitation	+5.1	
South West	Temp	-2.1	Growing conditions are quite favorable for orchards as long as the trees are not on low ground. However, high winds and hail in certain areas have caused significant losses. Conditions have been extremely favorable for fireblight. Obviously, rainfall has been more than adequate.
	Precipitation	+ .0	
South Central	Temp	-1.9	
	Precipitation	+2.2	
South East	Temp	-2.4	
	Precipitation	+4.9	

Please help us fill in the blanks! If you reside in a region that has not had a report submitted, please consider being a volunteer reporter. Any information you can provide will be appreciated. Please send an email to Tammy Stotts at tammy.stotts@iowaagriculture.gov

Wallace State Office Building
Ag Diversification & Market Development Bureau
502 E 9th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
www.iowaagriculture.gov

Please direct questions/comments regarding
newsletter to:
Tammy Stotts
Marketing Specialist
tammy.stotts@iowaagriculture.gov
Phone: 515-281-7657
Fax: 515-281-6178

Find us on the web at:
www.iowaagriculture.gov

AGRI TOURISM YOUR NICHE? ACT NOW!

Agritourism producers are encouraged to list their agritourism operations on a central website hosted by Iowa State University Extension, www.visitiowafarms.org. Over 150 operations have been listed on this site. Inclusion on this free site now offers the opportunity for your business to be included in promo-

tional ads at Iowa Interstate rest stops where over 2 million visitors stopped at just one site! Producers are encouraged to get involved. An effort is underway to form a producer led agritourism infrastructure within the state. To get involved, contact the Value Added Ag Program at 515-294-9483.

Read this

SELLING APPLES, ASPARAGUS, STRAWBERRIES OR PUMPKINS?

If you haven't received your Fresh Facts brochures featuring one of four crops: apples, asparagus, pumpkins or strawberries, contact our office to check on availability.

The series of brochures offer educational, nutritional and historical or local facts about each fruit or vegetable in addition to recipes and tips on storage or handling. The brochures were funded through a 2007 USDA Specialty Crop grant and are designed to be a

marketing tool for you, the grower, as well as an educational piece for consumers. Each brochure has an area for you to affix your stamp or label to help assure return visits.

You may view these brochures on our website at www.iowaagriculture.gov or contact Tammy Stotts at 515-281-7657 or Emily Wadle at 515-725-2078 to learn more about this exciting opportunity.

A MARKET CLOSE TO HOME

Last April letters were sent to nutritionists and food service personnel within Iowa's hospitals and nursing homes encouraging them to offer their patients the freshness and quality of locally grown foods. After contacting the Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA), we have some clarification regarding nursing care facilities obtaining their food through local sources.

While they have no specific rules or regulations that address the purchase or use of locally grown fruits and vegetables, they have issued information regarding this issue. The following statement is taken from that document: "All practices related to the safe procurement, storage, preparation and service of any health care facility would also apply to locally

grown fruits and vegetables." If you have attempted to sell produce to a nursing home or hospital in the past and have been turned away because you were not "an approved source" this may have opened a new door for you. There is interest among this group to obtain local products. Do not waste this opportunity. In addition to providing a new market for your product, you can also feel good about the fresher, better-tasting product you are providing to others within your community.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, or if you'd like to see the document issued by DIA, please contact Tammy Stotts at 515-281-7657 or by e-mail: tammy.stotts@iowaagriculture.gov.